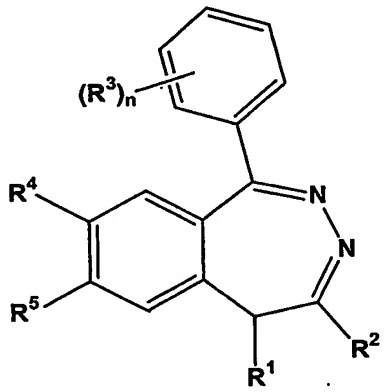
## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of treating an individual afflicted with an inflammatory disorder of epithelial tissue comprising administering to said individual an effective amount of at least one compound according to Formula I:



I

wherein:

$R^1$ is -($C_1$-$C_7$)hydrocarbyl or -($C_2$-$C_6$)heteroalkyl;

$R^2$ is selected from the group consisting of –H, and -($C_1$-$C_7$)hydrocarbyl;

wherein $R^1$ and $R^2$ may combine to form a carbocyclic or heterocyclic 5- or 6-membered ring;

$R^3$ is independently selected from the group consisting of –O($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl, -OH, -O-acyl, -SH, –S($C_1$-$C_3$)alkyl, –$NH_2$, -NH($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl, -N(($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl)$_2$, -NH-acyl, -$NO_2$ and halogen;

n is 1, 2 or 3;

$R^4$ and $R^5$ are independently selected from the group consisting of –O($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl, -OH, O-acyl, -SH, –S($C_1$-$C_3$)alkyl, –$NH_2$, NH-acyl and halogen;

wherein, $R^4$ and $R^5$ may combine to form a 5-, 6- or 7-membered heterocyclic ring;

or a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of such a compound, wherein said compound is administered at a dose of less than about 50 mg/day.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein said compound is administered at a dose of less than about 25 mg/day.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein said compound is administered at a dose of less than about 10 mg/day.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein said compound is administered at a dose of less than about 1 mg/day.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein said compound is administered at a dose of less than about 10 mg/ml.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein said compound is administered at a dose of less than about 1mg/ml.

7. The method according to claim 1, wherein said inflammatory disorder of epithelial tissue is a skin disorder.

8. The method according to claim 1, wherein said inflammatory disorder of epithelial tissue is a gastrointestinal disorder.

9. The method according to claim 1, wherein the compound is administered intracolonically or topically.

10. The method according to claim 1 wherein the compound according to formula I comprises a racemic mixture of (*R*)- and (*S*)- enantiomers with respect to the absolute conformation at the 5-position of the benzodiazepine ring.

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein:

$R^1$ is -($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl;

$R^2$ is selected from the group consisting of –H and -($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl;

$R^3$ is independently selected from the group consisting of –O($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl, -O-acyl and -OH;

n is 1, 2 or 3;

$R^4$ and $R^5$ are independently selected from the group consisting of –O($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl, -O-acyl and -OH, wherein, $R^4$ and $R^5$ may combine to form a 5-, 6- or 7-membered heterocyclic ring;

or a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of such a compound.

12. The method according to claim 11, wherein:

$R^1$ is $–CH_2CH_3$;

$R^2$ is $–CH_3$

$R^3$, $R^4$ and $R^5$ are independently selected from the group consisting of –OH and –O($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl;

n is 1, 2 or 3;

or a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of such a compound.

13. The method according to claim 12, wherein:

$R^1$ is $–CH_2CH_3$;

$R^2$ is $–CH_3$

$R^3$, $R^4$ and $R^5$ are independently selected from the group consisting of –OH and $–OCH_3$;

n is of 1, 2 or 3;

or a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of such a compound.

14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the compound is selected from the group consisting of:

1-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

1-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-hydroxy-8-methoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

1-(3-hydroxy-4-methoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

1-(3-methoxy-4-hydroxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

1-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-methoxy-8-hydroxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

1-(3-methoxy-4-hydroxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-hydroxy-8-methoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

1-(3-hydroxy-4-methoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-hydroxy-8-methoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the compound is 1-(3,4-dimethoxy-phenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

16. The method according to claim 1, wherein said wherein said compounds according to formula I are (*R*)-enantiomers substantially free of the corresponding (*S*)-enantiomers, with respect to the absolute conformation at the 5-position of the benzodiazepine ring.

17. The method according to claim 16, wherein:

$R^1$ is -($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl;

$R^2$ is selected from the group consisting of –H and -($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl;

$R^3$ is independently selected from the group consisting of –O($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl, -O-acyl and -OH;

n is 1, 2 or 3;

$R^4$ and $R^5$ are independently selected from the group consisting of –O($C_1$-$C_6$)alkyl, -O-acyl and -OH, wherein, $R^4$ and $R^5$ may combine to form a 5-, 6- or 7-membered heterocyclic ring;

or a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of such a compound.

18. The method according to claim 17, wherein:

$R^1$ is $-CH_2CH_3$;

$R^2$ is $-CH_3$

$R^3$, $R^4$ and $R^5$ are independently selected from the group consisting of –OH and $-O(C_1-C_6)$alkyl;

n is 1, 2 or 3;

or a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of such a compound.

19. The method according to claim 18, wherein:

$R^1$ is $-CH_2CH_3$;

$R^2$ is $-CH_3$

$R^3$, $R^4$ and $R^5$ are independently selected from the group consisting of –OH and $-OCH_3$;

n is of 1, 2 or 3;

or a pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of such a compound.

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the compound is selected from the group consisting of:

(*R*)-1-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

(*R*)-1-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-hydroxy-8-methoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

(*R*)-1-(3-hydroxy-4-methoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

(*R*)-1-(3-methoxy-4-hydroxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

(*R*)-1-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-methoxy-8-hydroxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

(*R*)-1-(3-methoxy-4-hydroxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-hydroxy-8-methoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

(*R*)-1-(3-hydroxy-4-methoxyphenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7-hydroxy-8-methoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine;

substantially free of the corresponding (*S*)-enantiomers;

and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof.

21. The method according to claim 20, wherein the compound is (*R*)-1-(3,4-dimethoxy-phenyl)-4-methyl-5-ethyl-7,8-dimethoxy-5H-2,3-benzodiazepine substantially free of the corresponding (*S*)-enantiomer;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.